

REMARKS

The Office Action dated May 25, 2004 has been received and carefully noted. The following remarks are submitted as a full and complete response thereto. By this Amendment, claims 11 and 12 are cancelled and new claims 13-27 are added. No new matter is added as new claims 13-27 are fully supported in the application as filed, as illustrated in an annotated copy of original Fig. 2b, which is attached hereto.

Claims 13-27 are presented for examination.

In view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks, favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 11-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over applicant's admitted prior art as set forth in pages 1-2 of the specification (hereinafter "AAPA")[†] and further in view of either Ruehl et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,216,763, hereinafter "Ruehl") or Leith (U.S. Patent No. 6,173,628, hereinafter "Leith"). By this Amendment, claims 11 and 12 have been cancelled, rendering the rejection thereof moot.

The Office Action took the position that the AAPA shows using a welding technique instead of a molding technique to join the frame members. Ruehl and Leith were cited as teaching placing frame members inside a mold cavity and injecting a molten material around the frame members to join the same.

Applicants respectfully submit that newly added claims 13-27 recite subject matter that is neither disclosed nor suggested by any combination of the prior art, for at least the reasons set forth below.

In the mold for connecting frame members of claim 13, engagement parts are provided for holding the frame members. Thus, positional control of the frame members can be achieved without using other tools, such as the die 105 and 106, which are required in Ruehl to keep the positional accuracy in the cast joint of each frame.

In addition, in the mold for connecting frame members of claim 13, since a gap is provided between the guide groove and at least one of the connection parts, the respective frame member can be smoothly inserted into the mold even if the respective frame member has a bend provided at an end portion thereof. Such a bend may be achieved, for example, by subjecting a connection part of a frame member to a bending treatment, as recited in claims 16, 17 and 18.

In contrast, since no gap is provided in Leith, a frame member of Leith cannot be smoothly inserted into the mold, especially if the frame member has a bend provided at an end portion thereof.

Further, since a gap is provided between the guide groove and the connection part in the mold for joining frame members of claim 13, the area for surrounding the connection part of the respective frame member with cast metal can be widened. Thus, the rigidity of the cast joint or connection structure of the frame members can be strengthened.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 13 is patentably distinct over the cited prior art and in condition for allowance. Applicants additionally submit that claims 14-19, which depend directly or indirectly from claim 13, are allowable for at least the reasons claim 13 is allowable. Accordingly, favorable action on claims 13-19 is respectfully requested.

Further, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 20-27, which recite using or providing a mold having limitations at least similar to those of the mold of claim 13, are neither anticipated nor rendered obvious by the cited prior art. Thus, favorable action on claims 20-27 is hereby additionally requested.

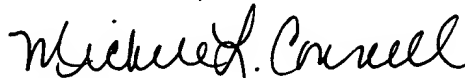
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, favorable reconsideration of this application and a Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner determine that any further action is necessary to place this application into better form, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned representative at the number listed below.

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension, together with any additional fees that may be due with respect to this paper, may be charged to counsel's Deposit Account No. 01-2300, **referencing docket number 106145-00021.**

Respectfully submitted,
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Attachments: Annotated Fig. 2b